

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 14-16, 18, and 20-23 are currently pending. Claim 17, 19, and 24-30 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer; and Claims 14, 18, 22, and 23 have been amended by the present amendment. The changes to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

Claims 25-30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,697,013 to McFarland et al. (hereinafter “the ‘013 patent”); Claims 14-18 and 20-23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the ‘013 patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,024,188 to Khun-Jush et al. (hereinafter “the ‘188 patent”); and Claims 19 and 24 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication that Claims 19 and 24 include allowable subject matter.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of Claims 14-16, 18, and 20-23 are rendered moot by the present amendment to independent Claims 14, 22, and 23. Claim 14 has been amended to include all the limitations of Claim 19 and intervening Claim 17. Accordingly, based on the indicated allowability of Claim 19, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 14 (and all associated dependent claims) is in condition for formal allowance.

Amended Claims 22 and 23, though of differing scope and/or statutory class, recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in Claim 14. Accordingly, for reasons

analogous to the reasons stated above for the patentability of Claim 14, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 22 and 23 are in condition for formal allowance.

CONCLUSION

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 19, 22, and 23 (and all associated dependent claims) are in condition for formal allowance.

Accordingly, in view of the prior indication of allowability, no further issues are outstanding and entry of the present amendment is believed to be in order. The present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is, therefore, respectfully requested.

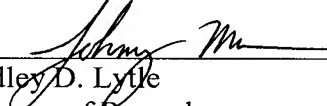
Respectfully submitted,

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